

HANDBOOK  
OF  
READING  
AND ITS  
NEIGHBOURHOOD

Georg. Add. Berks  
p. 22







*Reading, Berkshire.*

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# HANDBOOK OF READING;

WITH

*NOTES ON SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL  
NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES.*

By J. G. HARRIS,

*Author of a Hebrew, Chaldee, and English Vocabulary: Essays,  
Lectures, and Letters on Popular Education, Capital  
Punishment, Ancient and Modern Eloquence,  
the Origin of Language, &c.*

ILLUSTRATED WITH STEEL ENGRAVINGS.



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A

## Handbook of Reading.

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**R**EADING is unquestionably a place of very great antiquity, and the first mention which occurs of it in history, is in the year 871, at which time it is described as being a fortified town belonging to the Saxon kings, but then in possession of the Danes, who had thrown up an earthwork between the Thames and the Kennet. The origin of almost every ancient town is involved in some kind of obscurity, and that of Reading

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claims no exception from the general rule. It is supposed, however, to have been inhabited by the Saxons many years before the piratical Danes began to pour out the vial of destruction upon the fertile plains of Britain. Camden, whose antiquarian researches entitle him to be considered a high authority, supposes Reading to have derived its name from the great quantities of fern that grew in its neighbourhood, and in the language of the ancient Britons, was called *Redyng*. This etymology gathers strength from the circumstance of the town being generally denominated *Reddyng* at the time when the above celebrated antiquary compiled his *Britannia*. Again, it is supposed to have been derived from *Rhyd*, a ford, and *Ing*, a meadow, which, from its situation on a tract of land intersected by the river Kennet, appears to be more probable. At all events, whatever may be the exact etymology of the word, there can be no

doubt that the modern way of spelling it is evidently corrupt. Whether Reading was a British settlement previous to the Roman invasion, or whether it was then only first inhabited, the meagre pages of antiquity are insufficient to enable us to determine. Dr Salmon, indeed, has asserted that it is the SPENÆ\* of the "Itinerary;" and, to establish his opinion, refers to its situation at the confluence of two rivers, and also to its distance from the other stations, which, according to his system, perfectly agree with the numbers of Antoninus. The statements of this gentleman, however, cannot always be depended on, unless they are strengthened by the arguments of other writers.

\* Spinæ or Spenæ. The only Roman station in the county of Berkshire, the site of which has been satisfactorily settled, is Spinæ. The name and the distances, however, agree in identifying it with Speen, a village near Newbury. Yet it is remarkable that no Roman remains appear to have been discovered here—none at least sufficient to show the existence of such a station.

It appears clearly from the observations prefixed by Hearne to Brown Willis's account of the mitred Abbeys, that two castles have at different times been erected and destroyed in this neighbourhood, though neither walls nor fortifications are now remaining. The first stood on the spot where King Henry founded the Abbey, part of which was constructed with the ruins of the fortress. Asser Menevensis, a bishop of Sherborne, who wrote the life of Alfred, and assisted him in his literary pursuits, relates that the Danes, who were in possession of the town, retreated to this castle after their defeat at Englefield, by Ethelwolf. The other was raised by the usurper Stephen, and demolished by the orders of his successor, Henry II. Where it was situated is uncertain; though the term Castle Street seems to imply that it was near the spot thus denominated: yet, as mere entrenchments of earth have fre-

quently received the appellations of Castle Hill, and Castle Field, this cannot be regarded as being quite satisfactory.

Elfrida, the mother-in-law of Edward the Martyr, as he was styled by the courtesy of the monks, founded several religious houses, in expiation of the base murder of that prince, who was sacrificed through her desire of placing her own son Ethelred on the throne. Among these monuments of her guilt and penitence, was a nunnery in this town, built on the spot that is now occupied by St Mary's Church. The nunnery was suppressed on the endowment of the abbey, and its revenues appropriated to the use of that foundation.

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## The Abbey.



HIS very magnificent structure was founded by Henry I., for the maintenance of two hundred Benedictine monks, and the refreshment of travellers. It was begun in the year 1121, and completed in 1125. The charter recites, that "the abbeyes of *Reading*, *Chelsey* or *Cholsey*, and *Leominster*, having been destroyed for their sins, and their possessions fallen into the hands of the laity, the king, with the advice of his prelates, &c., had built a new monastery at Reading, and endowed it with the monasteries of Reading, Cholsey, and Leominster, together with their appurtenances of woods, fields, pastures, &c., with exemption from all tolls, duties, customs, and contributions." Besides these privileges, the abbots and monks were invested with the power of trying criminals, and intrusted, generally,

with the conservation of the peace in the town and neighbourhood. In return for these extensive grants, the monks, by an obligation in the charter, were to provide the poor and all travellers with necessary entertainment. William of Malmesbury testifies that the latter part of their duty was so well performed, that there was always more expended upon strangers than upon themselves. This was a mitred abbey; or, in other words, the abbot had the privilege of sitting in parliament: he also had the power of coining money, but to what extent it was exercised is not known, as no specimens of such a coinage are supposed to exist.

This abbey was the burial-place of many illustrious persons. The body of the founder, who died near Rouen, in Normandy, in the year 1135, was embalmed, brought to England, and here deposited; but his heart, eyes, tongue, brains, and bowels, were in-

tered beneath a handsome monument in the Church of Notre Dame at Rouen. Sandford asserts that when the monastery was converted into a royal palace at the Dissolution, the bones of the monarch were disturbed, and thrown out. But this relation never obtained general belief. Two councils were held here: one in the reign of John, by Pandulph, the pope's legate; the other in the time of Edward I., by Archbishop Peckham. The Parliament which assembled in the 31st year of the reign of Henry VI., is supposed to have been held in the refectory, which is about eighty-four feet long, by forty-eight feet wide.

The annual revenues of the abbey at the period of the Dissolution were valued at £1938, 14s. 3d., which, according to the present value of money, was at least £20,000 per annum, a proof that its possessions were hardly inferior to any in







1 Jan. 1862

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*Ruins of the Old Abbey, Reading, Berks*

England. Hugh Farringdon, the thirty-first and last abbot of Reading, was attainted of high treason, for refusing to deliver up his abbey to the visitors; and in the month of November 1539, was, together with two of his monks, named Rugg and Onion, hanged, drawn, and quartered, at Reading.

This extensive building appears to have occupied a circumference of nearly half a mile; but nothing remains except fragments of massive walls, composed of flint and gravel, and a gateway which was rebuilt only a few years ago by public subscription. The depredations of time, and the more destructive power of superstition and bigotry, have levelled its glories with the dust. The walls are eight feet thick in some parts, and were formerly cased with stone; but this has been long removed. Many conjectural and conflicting statements may be gathered from the various authors who have written their

respective histories of the abbey ; but as it is impossible at this distance of time to give the precise information we should wish, we think it would be far better, in the absence of reliable authority, to abstain from assigning the dilapidated portions of the abbey, as they may now be seen, to their original purposes. There is, however, an excellent plan of the several compartments of the abbey in "Man's History of Reading," a work somewhat useful to the topographical student ; but unfortunately too bulky and too expensive to be of any service to the general reader. The only ruins with which we are acquainted, and which may be compared with the ruins of the abbey, are those of Carnarvon Castle. From shapeless masses of stone, and from the zig-zag and grotesque appearance of the ruins which is sometimes exhibited to the eye of the visitor, and indicating but very little architectural design from their extremely dilapidated state, it is

hardly possible, we think, to form any accurate conception of the grandeur and magnificence of those buildings which were erected in the middle ages. There is enough, however, to inspire us with a feeling of admiration and wonder at the genius, skill, and workmanship of our ancestors, in the erection of those buildings, which, several centuries afterwards, became the spoil of a tyrannical and rapacious monarch, and, we must add, of a too supple and equally rapacious aristocracy. In those days of spoliation and reformation the Abbey of Reading was one of the earliest victims of royal and aristocratic plunder. Immense quantities of plate, jewellery, and other valuable articles were found by the parliamentary commissioners. It was no doubt a sad and painful sight to the owners to behold their property seized with such reckless and merciless severity; and to find that the "supremacy," which had been assumed by the king, proved

to them a far greater curse than the long-established supremacy of the pope had ever been. But this is a subject upon which we must not venture to dilate, not being altogether relevant to the object we have in view.

A curious and interesting story is related of the king, and which may perhaps be worth transcribing :—

“Henry VIII. having been hunting in Windsor Forest, went down about dinner-time to the Abbey of Reading, where, distinguishing himself as one of the king’s guard, he was invited to the abbot’s table. Here, his tooth being whetted by the keen air of the forest, he fed so lustily on a sirloin of beef, that his vigorous appetite was noticed by the master of the ceremonies. ‘Well fare thy heart,’ quoth the abbot, ‘I would give a hundred pounds if I could feed so heartily on beef as thou dost. Alas! my weak and *squeazie stomach* will hardly digest

the wing of a rabbit or chicken.' The monarch, having satisfied his palate, thanked the abbot for his good cheer, and departed undiscovered. Some weeks afterwards the abbot was arrested, conveyed to London, sent to the Tower, and allowed no food but bread and water. This treatment, together with his fears for the consequence of the king's displeasure, soon removed the effects of repletion ; and at last, when a sirloin was one day placed before him, he ate as freely as a famished ploughman. When he had finished his meal, the king, who had been a hidden spectator, burst from his concealment. ' My lord,' said the laughing monarch, ' presently deposit your hundred pieces of gold, or else no going hence all the days of your life. I have been the physician to cure your "squeazie stomach ;" and now, as I deserve, demand my fee for so doing.' The abbot, knowing that argument was of no avail with the stern Harry, paid the money, and re-

turned home, rejoicing that he had escaped so easily."

It is recorded that Henry VIII. frequently visited Reading, and in 1541 took up his residence for some time at the abbey. Edward VI., and the queens Mary and Elizabeth, were also frequent visitors; the latter had a canopied pew appropriated to her use in the parish church of St Lawrence.

On the site of Greyfriars' Church formerly stood a priory, which, for very many years, was used as a Bridewell, the west window of which was an elegant monument of the arts at a remote period. There was also a convent for nuns in Castle Street, which at the Dissolution was given by Henry VIII. to the Corporation, who disposed of it to the county for a prison. It has since been taken down, and St Mary's Chapel, we believe, is now standing on the same spot.



## **The Town and Neighbourhood.**

**R**EADING is situated on two small eminences, whose gentle declivities fall into a pleasant vale, through which the branches of the Kennet flow calmly till they unite with the Thames at the eastern extremity of the town.

The surrounding country is agreeably diversified with an intermixture of hill and dale, wood and water, and ornamented with a number of elegant seats. The prospect from the Forbury Gardens, a beautiful attraction in the summer to visitors generally, and which are situated on the north side of the town, and immediately contiguous to the jail and the splendid ruins of the far-famed abbey, is very extensive, commanding a fine view of Holme Park, at Sonning, the seat of Robert Palmer, Esq., who represented the county for many years in the House of Commons;

also of Caversham House and Park, the seat of the late millionaire, William Crawshay, Esq.; and of Amersham Hall, a fine red brick building erected about eight years ago at the expense of E. West, Esq., who conducts a large collegiate establishment for young gentlemen. The magnificent view of the Oxfordshire hills, from Mapledurham on the western side to the groves of Shiplake and Wargrave on the east, is a theme of admiration among most persons who are capable of appreciating the scenery of nature, which is at once both beautiful and picturesque.

On the mound or raised terrace in the Forbury Gardens there are seats for the accommodation of visitors; there is also a gun which was captured in the Crimean war, and presented to the corporation as a memento of the victory the allied armies gained over the Russians. In commemoration of the marriage of the Prince of Wales, in





*Friary Gardens, Reading, Berkshire.*

1863, a small oak tree was planted here by J. O. Taylor, Esq., who was then Mayor of Reading. The gardens are very tastefully laid out, and, under the able management of Mr Davis, invariably present a most delightful appearance. The fountains, vases, grottoes, bee-hives, and various other ornaments, add greatly to the beauty of this attractive spot. From the terrace above mentioned, the view of the Thames is somewhat intercepted by the embankment of the Great Western Railway. The rivers of Berkshire are the Thames, the Kennet, the Lamborn, the Ock, and the Loddon. The majestic Thames, or "King of floods," as Thomson calls it, is undoubtedly the most eminent of British streams. The splendid and ever-varied scenery that decorates its shores, the magnificent residences by which its current glides, and the animating theatres of British heroism and liberty through which it flows, are all calculated to awaken those emotions

of the heart which lead to reflection and to virtue. The genius of the poet has been often exercised in weaving wreaths for the god who is fabled to preside over the waves of this celebrated river.



### Religious Edifices.

**R**EADING contains three parish churches, respectively dedicated to St Mary, St Lawrence, and St Giles.

#### *St Mary's.*

This church stands, according to tradition, on the site of the nunnery of Elfrida before mentioned. It is said to have been the earliest Christian fabric erected in this part, after the conversion of the inhabitants. It was formerly called the Minster, hence the name of the adjoining street. In 1547, the old, and probably the Saxon, church was

pulled down, and the present one built on the site, partly from the ruins of the abbey. It is a plain massive structure in the later style of English architecture, with a beautiful square tower of tessellated flint and stone. About six years ago, the church underwent a complete restoration through the indefatigable exertions of the present esteemed vicar, the Rev. A. P. Purey-Cust. The transformation that was effected greatly improved both the appearance and convenience of the interior of the sacred edifice. A new organ was also erected, and which is considered equal, if not superior, to any other in the town. The monuments and tablets in this church are not so numerous as in that of St Lawrence. To the stranger, however, who may wish to form his own judgment of this church, with its beautifully stained-glass windows, we should recommend a short visit; and he will find enough, not only to excite his admiration, but to repay him for all his trouble.

**St Lawrence's Church.**

This building is situated at the east end of Friar Street, and on the north side of the market-place. This church was built in 1434, on the site of the old church, which had probably stood for several ages. It consisted of a nave, north aisle, galleries, and chancel, with chantry chapel on the north. The tower is at the west end of the nave. Within the last twelve months this church has undergone a complete restoration. It was reopened by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese on Tuesday, May 12th, 1868.

Among the relics belonging to this church in 1517, was "a gridiron of silver-gilt, with a bone of St Lawrence therein, weighing three-quarters of an ounce, the gift of Thomas Lynd, Esq." In this church lies buried John Blagrove, the celebrated mathematician, author of the "Mathematical Jewell," and other works, for which he engraved the plates



himself. He died in 1611. His monument has his *effigies*, a half-length, under an arch, habited in a cloak and ruff, holding a globe in one hand, and a quadrant in the other. Underneath is the following inscription,—

*Johannes Blagravus,  
Totus Mathematicus,  
Cum matre sepultus;*

or, in plain English, “John Blgrave, a perfect mathematician, buried with his mother,” which he directed by his will. This church may now be considered, without making any invidious comparison with the churches in the town, equal to any other in the county. The inhabitants of Reading are largely indebted to the spirited exertions of the Rev. Lewin Maine, during the two years he has held the vicarage; to Mr Joseph Morris, the architect; to the churchwardens and committee; and indeed to all others who have been instrumental in aiding the beautiful restoration of this sacred and venerable edifice.

**St Giles's.**

The parish of St Giles is the largest of the three in Reading. It comprises the hamlet of Whitley within its limits. The exterior of the church is not very attractive. It was very much damaged by the cannon of the Parliamentary army, during the time that the forces of Charles I. were here besieged in the year 1643. The building consists of a nave, side aisles, and chancel. Octagonally-shaped galleries extend over a portion of the aisles. The east window of the chancel is filled with stained glass. Several interesting monuments and tablets are to be seen within the walls of the sacred edifice. The tower has a peal of seven bells. There are some historical reminiscences of the church upon record, but the relation of them would probably be uninteresting to the general reader. The Rev. T. V. Fosbery is the respected

vicar of the parish, and he is also one of the bishop's chaplains.

There are also five other churches in the town, viz., St John's and St Stephen's, both of which are in the parish of St Giles ; Trinity, All Saints, and Greyfriars.

### *St John's.*

This church was erected in the year 1837 as a Chapel of Ease. It is a brick building with a stone frontage, and contains sittings for several hundred persons. The present incumbent is the Rev. W. Payne, who has held the incumbency, we believe, for upwards of twenty years ; and whose successful labours were recognised some three years ago by the presentation of a handsome testimonial from the warm-hearted and faithful members of his congregation.

### *St Stephen's Church*

was erected about five years ago in New

Town, and the services are conducted by the curates of St Giles.

### Trinity Church

is in the Oxford Road. This is also a brick building with a stone frontage, and was erected in 1826. The late Archdeacon Phelps was the incumbent of this church for many years. Few men have been more highly esteemed in the town than the late archdeacon. It was owing to his active and praiseworthy exertions that Greyfriars' Church was built some few years ago.

### Greyfriars' Church.

We have already stated that a priory formerly stood on the site, and which was up to a recent period used as a Bridewell. Of all the improvements which have taken place in the town during the last seven years, we have no hesitation in saying that this part of

it is probably one of the best—if not *the* best. The church and schools adjoining are quite an ornament to that end of Friar Street, and especially when we recall to mind its appearance before their erection. The parochial district of Greyfriars previously formed a part of the parish of St Lawrence. It is now an ecclesiastical district of itself; and the incumbency is in the presentation of certain trustees, who, after the erection of the church, unanimously elected the Rev. Dr Barkworth, the present respected incumbent.

#### *All Saints' Church*

is situated near the Bath Road, and forms a Chapel of Ease to St Mary's Church.

#### *St Mary's Chapel,*

in Castle Street, is the only other place of worship in connexion with the Church of England in this town. It formerly belonged to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.

A secession of some of the members having occurred, the Congregational Chapel on the opposite side was erected for their use. Those who remained afterwards identified themselves with the Church of England, and the Rev. C. J. Goodhart was for many years the popular incumbent of St Mary's Episcopal Chapel. The Rev. G. J. Tubbs, his successor, has a large congregation, and is highly esteemed.

There are several chapels belonging to the various denominations of Christians in the town. The Rev. W. Legg is the minister of the Independent Chapel in Broad Street, and the Rev. S. C. Gordon is the co-pastor. The Rev. R. Bulmer is the pastor of Castle Street Congregational Chapel. The Rev. J. F. Stevenson is the minister of Trinity Congregational Chapel, in the Queen's Road. The Rev. J. Aldis is the minister of the Baptist Chapel, in the King's

Road. Few men have had more gratification in seeing their sons achieve the highest honours at the University of Cambridge than Mr Aldis has within the last few years. The first came out as Senior Wrangler. About two years afterwards, the second son that graduated appeared as Sixth Wrangler ; and lastly, another son came out as Second Wrangler. Such honourable distinctions as these, we think, are worthy of being recorded in connexion with the name of the Rev. J. Aldis.

The members of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion have a neat chapel in Church Street. The "Brethren," or, as they are sometimes called, the "Plymouth Brethren," have also their "rooms" in the same street. The Society of Friends, an influential and highly respectable body of Christians, have their meeting-house also in Church Street. The Primitive Methodists have a large chapel, formerly called the New Hall, in

London Street. The Wesleyan Reformers have a chapel in Hosier Street. Providence Chapel, in the Oxford Road, was erected a few years ago by the Particular Baptists. A number of them who afterwards seceded now meet together for public worship in a large room in the Queen's Road.

Our task is now completed with regard to a brief description of the churches and chapels in the town ; yet we ought, although we had nearly forgotten, to mention that there is a church at the top of the Kendrick Road, just outside the borough, but in the parish of St Giles. This church occupies a commanding position ; and, when the tower or spire is added, it will be more conspicuous than it is from the Caversham hills. The Rev. W. F. Addison is the incumbent of Christ Church.

#### *The Roman Catholic Chapel.*

This is a pretty-looking building between



the Jail and the Forbury Gardens. The interior is neatly fitted up, and it possesses a good organ. The entrance for carriages is on the north side; another entrance is in Abbot's Walk. The Rev. Canon Ringrose has been the officiating minister for many years, and is much esteemed for his liberal and tolerant views.

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### *Distinguished Natives.*

**R**EADING has given birth to several remarkable men. William of Reading, Archbishop of Bordeaux in the reign of Henry III.; John Blagrave, whom we have already noticed; Archbishop Laud; Sir John Barnard, an alderman of London; James Merrick, who translated the Psalms; William Baker, a printer of some learning in the last century; Sir Constantine Phipps, Lord Chancellor of Ireland;


and Dr Phanuel Bacon, a dramatic writer, are among the number of those celebrated characters whose learning and talents have done honour to the town, and whom the inhabitants are proud to rank with its most distinguished natives. Archbishop Laud was beheaded, after a life of strange vicissitudes, on Tower Hill, on the 10th of January 1644, and in the seventy-first year of his age. His benefactions to the town were considerable; but to many of the recipients of his charity his melancholy fate may not be known. His virtues and his faults were many. The latter, however, were amply atoned for, humanly speaking, by the exemplary fortitude which he manifested during his trial, and the execution which followed.

Mr Justice Talfourd was also born at Reading. He was for some time a pupil of the celebrated Dr Valpy, and is the well-known author of "Ion," and other dramatic

and literary pieces. His melancholy death occurred suddenly while on circuit at Stafford, in 1854. His portrait is in the Town Hall; it was presented to the corporation by his brother, Mr Frank Talfourd. The deceased is represented in his judicial robes.

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### *The Town Hall.*

 HIS building is situated between Vastern Street and St Lawrence's Church. The entrance is not very attractive, but the interior has been improved and decorated at considerable expense, within the last three or four years. It presents a very beautiful appearance. A new organ was afterwards erected and presented by the Philharmonic Society to the corporation. In the Council Chamber are some fine portraits of Archbishop Laud, Mr John Ken-

drick, Sir Thomas Rich, Bart., Sir Thomas White, and a full-length portrait of Mr Richard Aldworth. There is also a portrait of Queen Elizabeth, which is generally regarded as a very good likeness.

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### The Assize Courts.

HESE are situated in the Forbury adjoining the Abbey Gateway. The building was completed in 1860. The monthly sittings of the County Court are held here. The façade of the building can only be seen by standing before it. The courts are thrown too far back behind the Abbey Gateway on one side, and some houses on the other, to be seen to any advantage. Consequently, the frontage is obscured, which mars the otherwise splendid effect which the building would have. Even the court-yard does not com-

pensate for the depressing effect that is produced by the Assize Courts being erected so far in the background. Many buildings possessing fewer architectural beauties are often seen to a much greater advantage than the Reading Assize Courts.

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### **The Corporation.**



HIS body consists of a High Steward, Recorder, Town Clerk, Mayor, six Aldermen, and eighteen Councillors, and other officials.

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### **Municipal Divisions and Population.**



HE borough is divided into three wards, and it has sent members to Parliament ever since the 23d of Edward I. The population of the

town at the census in 1861 was just over 25,000; it is now supposed to have reached nearly 30,000—a proof that its prosperity is still on the increase.


Reading was formerly celebrated for the number of its woollen and clothing manufactories; but these, from a variety of causes, are now no longer in existence.

The income arising from the various legacies which have been bequeathed for pious and charitable purposes, amounts to a considerable sum annually. A particular enumeration of them, however, would occupy more space than could with propriety be allotted in a work of this description.

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## Educational Institutions.

### *The Grammar School.*

 HIS institution was founded in the reign of Henry VII. Dr Valpy, an eminent classical scholar, presided over the school for many years. He was the author of several useful works, and was held in high esteem by a large circle of friends. His influence in the town was very great, and he had a world-wide popularity. After his death, a statue was erected to his memory in St Lawrence's Church. It has a long inscription in Latin, recounting the virtues and admirable qualifications of the deceased. The school has been in *abeyance* for some time past ; but, owing to recent Parliamentary enactments, it is proposed to increase its usefulness. As the scheme is not yet completed, and the site for the buildings not selected, it would be premature to express

any further opinion upon the subject. Julius Palmer, who was one of the masters of this once celebrated school, was burnt at the stake in Queen Mary's reign. Among the eminent persons who received their education in this seminary of learning, may be enumerated Archbishop Laud, John Blagrove, James Merrick, the translator of the Psalms, and the Rev. Charles Coates, who wrote a History of Reading, and many others.

#### **The Blue Coat School.**

In 1658, Mr Richard Aldworth bequeathed £4000 to found a blue coat school, and maintain a master, lecturer, and twenty boys. This has been increased by various donations, and the school is now a very respectable establishment, the funds being sufficient to support and educate from thirty to forty children.




*The Green School,*

in Broad Street, takes its name from the colour of the dress of the girls who are educated there. They are for the most part the children of decayed tradesmen, or those who are orphans. It was established in 1779. The school is partly supported by voluntary subscriptions, and partly by various legacies and benefactions. It is superintended by a committee of ladies, clergymen, ministers, and other persons. Annual sermons are preached in the three parish churches on St Thomas's day in aid of the funds.

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## The Royal Berkshire Hospital.

 HIS building is situated in the London Road. This excellent institution was opened in 1839. It has been considerably enlarged within the last few years, and presents a noble appearance, with its fine Ionic portico. It is munificently supported by voluntary subscriptions, donations, and other benefactions; and it is probably one of the most important and most useful institutions in Reading, or in the county.

There are various alms-houses, with good endowments, both for men and women. On the south side of Castle Street some new buildings have been erected within the last few years; they are for aged men without wives.

## **The Savings Bank.**



HIS institution was established in 1817. Its offices were originally in Friar Street; but the business is now carried on in a commodious and elegant building, erected for the purpose, in London Street. The last report, which was published in the local papers, indicated its increased prosperity; and a Parliamentary Report, issued some months ago, stated that it excelled all the other Savings Banks in the county, in the actual amount of business that was transacted. The trustees and managers are a very numerous and influential body, and their attendance is rigidly enforced by the rules; indeed, the management is generally admitted to be of the most satisfactory character. Mr George Hawkes is the actuary.

## The New Railway Station.



THE Great Western Railway Company have fully redeemed their character by the erection of the above-mentioned beautiful building. The Station has a remarkably handsome appearance from that part of Friar Street opposite the railway gates. Without making any attempt to describe the particulars of the building, it will be sufficient to state, now the interior is entirely fitted up, that it is replete with every comfort and convenience both to the officials and to travellers. The style of the building is unique, when compared with stations elsewhere. Altogether it is an ornament to the town.

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## **Temperance Society.**



HIS society has been established many years. It is probably one of the most useful institutions in the town. There is a large and handsome hall for lectures and other purposes adjoining the Reading-rooms in West Street. The influence of the society is considerable, and the benefits which it has conferred upon many who have been reclaimed from the vice of drunkenness are incalculable. Mr Jennings, the indefatigable missionary, resides on the premises, and comfortable accommodation can be afforded to strangers on temperance principles. The affairs of the society are ably managed by a very respectable committee, the chairman of which is Mr W. I. Palmer, of the eminent firm of Huntley and Palmers. It is of

sufficient importance also to add that the Band of Hope, in connexion with the society, has upwards of one thousand members.

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### The Dispensary.



HIS institution is in Chain Street. It is supported by public subscriptions, and has been enlarged within the last two years. To the poorer classes it is an exceedingly valuable institution.

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### The New Cattle Market



S situated near the Great Western Railway, on the west side of Regent Street, leading to Caversham Bridge. It occupies a large area, and has every convenience for the sale of cattle, horses, sheep, &c. Here are also *abattoirs*,

which were built at considerable expense ; but, owing to some inexplicable cause, they are not used to the extent that was originally expected. Butchers, perhaps, like most other tradesmen, prefer carrying on their business under their own immediate superintendence. The removal of the Cattle Market from the central position of the town, in which it was held for so many generations, was a subject of frequent discussion ; but, after the lapse of seven years, it may now be considered satisfactorily settled.

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### **The Corn Exchange and Market.**



HIS building was erected in 1854. There are two entrances, one in Broad Street, and the other from the Market Place. The large room that is used for the Corn Market, which is held

every Saturday, is approached by an arcade of considerable dimensions, having an area of at least one hundred feet in length by fifty feet in breadth. A large amount of business is transacted here. The roof is of glass, and supported by cast-iron pillars.

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## Assembly Rooms.

### Model Lodging-Houses.




THESE buildings have recently been erected in Friar Street, and have a very attractive appearance. The former are on the south side of the street, and are used for concerts, public auctions, and dinners, balls, public meetings, &c. Mr Jameson, of the Market Place, is the spirited proprietor of these rooms. The Model Lodging-Houses are on the north side of the street. They have a very handsome frontage, and their beautiful design does great



credit to Messrs W. & J. T. Brown, the architects. The buildings have been erected, we believe, at the sole expense of J. H. Blagrove, Esq., of Calcot Park, who has recently succeeded to what is called the "Blagrove Property" in the town.

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### *The Cemetery*

S at an angle of two roads just outside the eastern part of the borough, one leading to Sonning and London, and the other to Erleigh and Wokingham. It was established in 1842, and ten acres of land are enclosed within the boundary walls; six of which are consecrated, and the remainder are appropriated to the use of the Nonconformists. There is a small lodge on either side of the entrance gateway, both of which are for the use of the sexton. The carriage-road to the chapel

that is used for the burial-service of the Church of England, is broad, and extends nearly from one end of the cemetery to the other. The building on the right is used by the Dissenters. The cemetery is tastefully laid out, and some of the monumental designs are very neatly executed. The stranger should, at any rate, endeavour to pay a visit to this part of the town.

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### **The County Jail.**




HIS is a handsome and spacious red brick building on the east side of the Forbury Gardens. The frontage, which has an unusually attractive appearance for a prison, is opposite the north, and from the two railways an excellent view of this part of the building may be obtained. Facing this entrance, which is the only one,

the Governor's residence is on your right hand, and that of the Chaplain is on your left. The building appropriated to the use of the prisoners is at the back, and extends a considerable distance to the long gravel walk running parallel with a portion of the Kennet. "It is a pity," says an American author, in reference to this jail, "so many eat prison-bread who could earn and have honest loaves of their own at home."

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### *The New Workhouse,*

N the Oxford Road, has been erected within the last two years. It is a spacious building, handsome in appearance, and has ample accommodation for a large number of inmates. Of some seven or eight architects who were competitors, Mr Woodman, the Borough Sur-

veyor, was the successful candidate. The plans and drawings of the unsuccessful candidates were afterwards exhibited at the Assembly Rooms, and were generally admired.

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### Freemasons' Lodge.

 HIS neat building was erected in the Greyfriars' Road some years ago. During that period the fraternity has increased in its numbers, and is becoming an influential body in the town.

The Odd Fellows have rooms in St Lawrence's Churchyard. The Foresters are numerous in the town and neighbourhood, but their meetings are held in public-houses.

## **The Church of England Young**


### **Men's Christian Association**

S in St Mary's Butts. About three years ago the building was purchased. There is a large and handsome room in which the society's meetings are held, and for the use of readers. There is also a good library. This association has been established upwards of twenty years. Mr M. H. Sutton is the president.


There are two or three other associations of a similar character in the town.

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## **The Athenæum**


S in Friar Street, opposite the Station gates. It was established in 1842. It is simply a reading-room for gentlemen, who are admitted upon paying one guinea per annum. No lectures are delivered there. Richard Benyon, Esq., M.P., is the president.

## The Banks

N the town are those of Messrs Stephens, Blandy, and Co. ; Messrs J. C. Simonds and Co. ; and the London and County Joint Stock Bank, of which Mr Strachan is the able manager.

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## Newspapers.

HE *Reading Mercury*, an old established paper, being in the one hundred and forty-sixth year of its publication. Professedly "Liberal," but neutral in politics. Price 4d and 5d.

The *Berkshire Chronicle*, a Conservative paper, the leading articles of which are ably written. It has been established forty-five years. Price 3d and 4d.

Both papers are influential in the districts where they are circulated.

The *Berks Telegraph* was established 1860.  
Price 1d.

"The local news is added to a sheet of general intelligence from London."

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## Commercial Establishments.

**I**N a preceding part of this little work we have said that Reading was formerly distinguished for its woollen and cloth manufactories; but, in the lapse of time, the trade disappeared. It is now distinguished for the manufacture of biscuits, and for a delicious condiment well known as the "Reading Sauce." There is also another great commercial place of business in the town, called the Royal Berkshire Seed Establishment. As some particulars respecting these establishments may be interesting to the visitor, we shall endeavour

to describe them as briefly as possible. Our attention will be directed, in the first place, to Messrs Huntley & Palmers'

### **Biscuit Factory.**

The origin and progress of this remarkable establishment have been the theme of several eloquent writers, and, consequently, its history must be pretty well known. Like other gigantic institutions of the kind, it had its small beginnings.

Let us now give some faint outline of their manufactory and the magnitude of their business. The real secret of the superior reputation of their goods—apart from a conscientious regard for the quality of the ingredients—is the perfect kneading and mixing afforded by machinery. An engine; nominally of eighty horse-power, but capable of putting forth much more if occasion requires, is the motive agent of the whole. Entering a room on the ground floor of the



building, straps, drums, cog-wheels, and all the paraphernalia of their kind, are whizzing in apparently wild confusion about your ears. Descending into it is a long pipe from some unknown region above. Suddenly the attendant baker taps smartly on the pipe as a signal, from which forthwith descends a torrent of milk, eggs, and all the liquid ingredients necessary to the creation of biscuits. No sooner is this done than a storm of flour from a depending shoot adds the solids to the fluid mixture. Instantly, by a touch, the pan begins to move, and as it revolves, a large grooved wheel or roller, turning within it and so as to meet it in its passage, gradually reduces the mixture to a stiff paste. The next process is to roll the paste well out, just as any cook would prepare your pie crust at her kitchen board. But here the great superiority of machinery is manifested. The paste is passed to and fro, again and again, through heavy iron rollers, worked,

as is all the rest of the machinery, by steam-power, until it is reduced to a perfectly smooth even consistency. It is then guided up an inclined plane to the machine which cuts and stamps it into biscuits. It is not only in open pans the process of mixing goes on. In some cases a closed drum is used, in which a set of knives revolve, and produce a similar result to the roller already described. The machines for cutting and stamping are amongst the most curious and interesting part of the machinery. Some biscuits are cut off by a cylinder covered with the requisite moulds, which presses against the roller whereon works the endless band already alluded to. Others are cut off, guillotine fashion, by a hopper, in which are fixed keys that strike each biscuit as it receives its imprint and lays it flat on a board below. Another cutting apparatus is specially dedicated to "filberts," and consists of two thick, flat, circular plates of gun metal set

close together, and fitted all round with moulds, each of which represents a "filbert." The long string of paste is led up to the plates, which, being set in motion, draw it between them and chop off "filberts" by thousands, in less time than it takes to write about it.

Another invention consists of a strong iron cylinder fitted with a piston, which forces the paste through a set of irregular rough-edged moulds, producing the material that a number of youngsters fashion with almost incredible speed into "princes' feathers," "crowns," and other curious emblems of royalty.

The ovens are not the least important part of this interesting establishment. The rooms in which they are built are well ventilated, and mostly constructed with galvanised iron roofs, lofty and airy, and calculated to lessen, if not wholly to remove, the danger to health from working in a heated atmosphere.

More than one hundred distinct kinds of

biscuits are now made at Messrs Huntley and Palmers' establishment, and each of these, it must be remembered, has its peculiar idiosyncrasy to be humoured, provided for, or overcome. Thus some demand a quick oven, others a slow one; some put in upon a revolving or self-acting oven, enter it as paste at one end, and quit it as biscuits at the other, with the most methodical regularity; others again require to be watched with the closest attention, and by a most experienced eye, aided by a thermometer fixed at the door of their prison-house. Some of the tribe again insist upon being boiled as well as baked, and demand the luxurious intervention of a cold bath between the two heating processes. Some leave the ovens with the satisfaction that they have been sufficiently roasted there, others require a drying-room not much cooler than the oven itself. All these peculiarities provided for, the baskets full of

biscuits are hauled by a "Jacob's ladder" to the upper regions and enter into stock, each batch being duly weighed by a clerk, whose report checks the quantity previously supplied to the overlookers of the mixing-room. But into the mysteries of that department it will not become us to enter.

Upwards of twenty carpenters are continually engaged in making and repairing the wooden boxes which hold biscuits, or in which smaller parcels may be transmitted to distant customers. Several coopers are required to make and mend casks for similar purposes; and not less than thirty persons, we believe, are employed in unpacking and sorting returned "empties," and in cleansing old tins before they are fit for refilling. The tins themselves, so familiar to our eyes in the windows of the grocers' shops, are made by contract at a factory in the town. Then there is a fitter's shop for work connected with the machinery, and a smith's shop as a

sort of appendage to the fitter's, in the former of which many a new invention first sees the light, and is worked out under the eye of the principal.

We will now return to the rooms where the biscuits have been put to scale after their ascent by the ladder of Jacob. In separate divisions, on large broad counters, are the various sorts of biscuits, waiting to be scrutinised by boys whose duty it is to remove any that are broken or damaged—a very large proportion of some brittle descriptions. Next there are departments for packing the biscuits in tins. Each room used for this purpose is supplied with a gallery, in which the tins are papered, and then passed down a shoot in endless succession to the hands below. Women are engaged in a private room in carefully packing the finer and more delicate sorts in tin cases, a process requiring much care and ingenuity. When once in cases there is the labelling process to be gone

through, an art in itself requiring a great amount of "knack" and adroitness. When labelled, every tin must be taken to a drying-room, or the paste would rust and spoil the brilliant exterior. The labels are works of art; some designed by Owen Jones, and worked out by the famous Delarue. The firm have a staff of commercial travellers by whom they are represented in almost every town and important village throughout the kingdom. In some of the smallest and most obscure villages in the West of England, we have ourselves seen the well-known tin cases in the little shop windows. And it is a remarkable fact that the owners are always glad to receive any information respecting the town in which Huntley and Palmers' biscuits are made.

Having given these particulars of the machinery and other appliances of this colossal establishment, which covers an area of several acres, and which we confess convey

but an inadequate idea of what is continually going on there, we regret that we are unable to give any particular account of the large consumption of agricultural and other produce in the shape of flour, butter, eggs, milk, sugar, &c., in this one establishment of food manufacture.

It is of sufficient importance to add that Messrs Huntley and Palmers have taken every care to supply their work-people, numbering nearly one thousand, with a large reading-room, library, and other means of intellectual improvement. Some of the establishment add to these by holding, during the winter season, lectures, "readings," musical entertainments, and *soirees*. In the summer months out-door sports are generally preferred. There is a sick fund to which all the hands are required to contribute according to the amount of their wages, unless belonging to some other club. But it is a pleasing fact to state that the general health is very good, owing to the proper



regard that is paid to ventilation, and the reasonable hours of employment.

**The Royal Berkshire Seed Establishment.**

Messrs Sutton & Sons, the proprietors of this celebrated establishment, have gained a world-wide and well-merited reputation for the excellence of their seeds. We therefore purpose giving a brief description of the resources employed to supply their extensive trade. The shop facing the Market Place very inadequately represents the premises occupied. Immediately behind, there extends a long range of offices, and connected with these is an immense building for the execution of orders. The visitor cannot but be struck with the excellent system that everywhere prevails. The seeds are arranged in suitable compartments and carefully separated. Every appliance that experience and skill can devise to insure accuracy and promptitude in the execution of their orders,

whether for foreign, colonial, or home purposes, has been adopted. There is also a very large seed store in the King's Road, in which, previous to the sowing season, thousands of bales of natural grasses for permanent pasture, clover, turnip, mangel wurzel, and other seeds are placed. As each parcel is received, fifty or one hundred seeds are counted from every sack, and the growing quality carefully tested in a house fitted expressly for the purpose in the plant nursery leading towards the Forbury. In addition to this test, samples are put aside, and, at the proper season, sown at their experimental farm in the London Road. By this means not only is the growing quality of the seeds again tried, but the character and comparative merits of every kind of vegetable, flower, and agricultural plant ascertained. Messrs Sutton are thus in a position to speak with confidence as to the value of the articles they offer; and,

as so many new varieties are annually introduced, these experiments must of necessity be of immense and important benefit to their numerous customers.

It should be stated that very few of the seeds sent out by Messrs Sutton are grown in this immediate neighbourhood; but they employ growers in different counties where the soil is found most suitable, and in this way some thousands of acres are occupied. Many kinds of grasses, however, are better matured abroad, and large tracts of land are sown, and the produce shipped to them.

Messrs Sutton's exportation of seeds to India, Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and other countries, is immense; and they must have an excellent system of packing, as we have recently seen letters from many of their customers, in which they speak in very flattering terms of the germinating power or quality of the seeds, and also of the crops produced from them.

At the Paris International Exhibition, in 1867, Messrs Sutton exhibited a splendid case of seeds, which attracted considerable attention, and for which they were awarded a silver medal. It will be remembered, no doubt, by many, that this case was erected in the Corn Exchange, in this town, a short time previously to its being packed for Paris ; and, as the seeds were not only of the finest quality, but skilfully and tastefully arranged, it certainly is not surprising that our horticultural and agricultural papers should have referred to it in the flattering terms which they did, by pronouncing or declaring it to be a "leading and remarkable display of commercial enterprise." The great success which Messrs Sutton achieved on this memorable occasion must have been highly gratifying, not only to themselves, but also to their numerous friends and customers in all parts of the world.

We may add that there is a plant nur-

sery behind the seed stores in the Market Place, and that there are larger grounds for the cultivation of fruit trees, roses, and shrubs, in the London and Kendrick roads.

Like most other philanthropic or thoughtful firms, Messrs Sutton have made ample provision for the moral and mental improvement of their *employés*. They [have fitted up a commodious reading-room, and various daily and weekly newspapers and periodicals are supplied. There is also a lending library of useful books in connexion with it, and everything that can promote the comfort and happiness of their assistants, Messrs Sutton have always evinced an anxious solicitude to accomplish. A mutual sympathy and reciprocal confidence, under circumstances like these, cannot, we think, be too highly commended, or too warmly appreciated.

### **Reading Iron Works.**

This establishment (formerly Barrett, Exall, & Andrewes') is well known, and has a favourable reputation both at home and abroad. The manufacture of agricultural implements is still carried on in all their diversified branches. Machinery of every possible description, whether for printing a newspaper, or for raising many thousand gallons of water, or for any other mechanical and scientific purpose, is manufactured at these works. Where skill and energy are combined, it is impossible, we think, to exaggerate the vast importance and utility of such an establishment as this in a flourishing town like Reading.

### **The "Reading Sauce" Establishment.**

Few sauces have enjoyed a greater popularity, or a more lengthened reputation, than the well-known "Reading Sauce." In all

## *The "Reading Sauce" Establishment.* 67

parts of the civilised world, from China to Canada, and from London to the antipodes, this delicious condiment is a special favourite. Spurious imitations have sprung up from time to time, but they have found no real favour, or *flavour*, either with the connoisseur or the epicure. Into the mysterious art of making this popular "sauce," we have no wish ourselves to be initiated, or to initiate others, even if we could. Nor have we any desire to know and to publish the exact number of bottles that is made and sold throughout the year. The exportation is *great*, the consumption is *greater*, and the manufacture of the "sauce" itself must be *greatest*. Our scanty information respecting this establishment must be an apology for the brevity of our remarks. We may state, however, that, in addition to the celebrated "sauce," a large trade in pickles, and every other manufacture peculiar to this branch of commerce, is carried on in Duke Street.

### Concluding Remarks on Reading.



THE town is in the form of an equilateral triangle, consisting of several principal streets, crossed by various other smaller ones, and is divided in the centre into various small islands, connected by bridges, by the branches of the Kennet.

The streets are for the most part spacious and well built, and present no inconsiderable number of handsome-looking houses and shops, as well as some important public buildings. Here and there may still be seen a few erections of the fifteenth century, with their characteristic high gables. There are several excellent wharves on the Kennet; and altogether Reading presents ample evidence of the prosperity it has now for some years enjoyed, and which is still increasing. In 1831, the population was 15,595. In 1871



## *Concluding Remarks on Reading.* 69

it will most probably exceed 30,000, so that in forty years it will have doubled itself. A greater proof of the legitimate prosperity of the town, certainly, could not be given!

But the sanitary condition of Reading takes a very high rank, both from the Registrar-General's returns, and from the published opinions of eminent medical men. It is a well-known fact that the number of deaths in Reading is considerably less than that of many other towns of equal population. The writer of these lines can affirm that he has known persons, and especially children between the ages of eight and fourteen, who have come in a very sickly state of health to reside here, and yet within the short space of a few months have been entirely restored to health. The real fact is, the temperature of Reading is not subject to those extreme changes which characterise many other towns. While on the one hand it has not the brac-

ing qualities of the north, it has not on the other the relaxing tendencies of the south. Lying then, as it does, between these two extremes, it possesses a temperature that strongly recommends itself to persons of all ages and conditions of life. Moreover, Reading possesses some other eminent advantages which deserve especial notice in a work of this description. It is now the great artery of nearly all the railway travelling in the United Kingdom. To almost any part the traveller can find his way without the slightest inconvenience. A glance at the railway map, and a reference to the time tables, will satisfy the most sceptical on points like these. It is also important to notice, in confirmation of the views of the author of these remarks, that there are ladies' and gentlemen's boarding schools of a superior grade in the town, the pupils of which have come several hundred miles from their homes partly on account of their health.

## *Concluding Remarks on Reading.* 71

These concluding remarks with respect to the healthiness of Reading, and the other important advantages, especially those of education, which the town possesses, we have made *con amore*.

We shall now offer a few observations on the country around Reading, and leave the reader to form his own judgment on the truthfulness or merits of our representation. One fact, however, must not be omitted. The country twelve miles round is probably as healthy and as interesting in many of its objects as any other part of the kingdom. But on any debatable subject there must of necessity be a diversity of opinion. It is therefore not improbable that some persons, whose eclectic taste may lead them to form a different conclusion, will demur to the statements we are now making. Should this happen to be the case, we can only say that we have not the slightest intention, either to

excite any jealousy, or to provoke any hostile or unfriendly criticism.

Let us now, gentle reader, take a brief and rapid survey of some of the principal villages ; and for the sake of convenience we will do so in alphabetical order.



### Aldermaston,



ABOUT a mile and a half from the main road, is situated south of the Kennet, on the border of Hampshire, at a distance of eleven miles S.W. from Reading. In the church, among other monuments, is one of alabaster, with the effigies of Sir George Forster, who died in 1526, and his wife Elizabeth. Round the sides, under Gothic canopies, are small figures of their eleven sons, in armour, and eight daughters with the angular head dresses of the day.

Aldermaston House was built in 1636. The park consists of nearly eight hundred acres of ground, and contains many venerable oaks, some of them above twenty feet round. There are entrenchments visible between Aldermaston Heath and Stratfield Mortimer windmill. The drive from Reading is an exceedingly pretty one. There are three fairs held here, May 6, July 7, and October 11.


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### Arborfield




IS an interesting spot about five miles from Reading. The Loddon, which adorns this pretty place, is a great attraction to anglers. "Those who admire scenes of repose and unpretending beauty," says an old author, "should wander on a fine evening in the neighbourhood of Arborfield."

## Basildon

 S distant eight miles from Reading. The mansion in Basildon Park is one of the finest seats in the county. It was purchased by the late James Morrison, Esq., M.P., in whose family it still continues. The park extends to a considerable distance on one side of the road, while on the other is seen the mazy windings of the river Thames, which here divides the county from Oxfordshire. The scenery in the neighbourhood is generally attractive to tourists.

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## Beenham

 S rather more than a mile from the road, and eight miles S.W. from Reading. Stackhouse, who wrote the "History of the Bible," was vicar of this parish, and is buried in the chancel of the

parish church, where there is a monument to his memory. It is a most delightful ride to this rural retreat, and one which the tourist will never regret.

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### **Binfield**

S ten miles S.E. from Reading, three from Wokingham, and about eight from Windsor. This place is celebrated as having been the residence of Pope, from the early age of six until he removed to Twickenham. About half a mile from the house in which the immortal poet lived, an interesting memorial of him some few years since was to be seen. It was the tree under the shade of which he composed many of his earlier pieces, and on the bark of which were cut in large letters the words, "HERE POPE SUNG."

**Bradfield.**

THE rural beauties of this delightful place, which is about eight miles distant, are greatly admired by competent judges of the picturesque. The romantic scenery, the refreshing breeze, the green fields, and numerous other charms, tend to render this village one of the most attractive near Reading. The building, which is erected for the aged and the helpless—for the reception of those upon whom adversity may have fallen, but whose poverty is no crime—is in a lovely and salubrious situation. Could anything more be added to the comfort and happiness of those who are so carefully provided for by the State?

**St Andrew's College,**


which is incorporated by Royal Charter, occupies a favourable position here. Some of its students have highly distinguished



themselves ; and the emoluments of the head master, who must be a man of first-class attainments, are equal to the income of a colonial bishop. The Rev. Thomas Stevens, M.A., the rector of the parish of Bradfield, is also warden of the College.

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## Burghfield

S five miles S.W. The abbots of Reading Abbey had a residence in this place, and its relics are yet visible. The parish church contains an ancient monument with the figure of a crusader in wood. The Loddon has considerable attractions to the angler in this neighbourhood. Indeed, it is the favourite resort of those who are attracted by the freshness, and the "luxuriance of loveliness," that overspreads the whole extent of this beautiful part of the country.

## Caversham



S in Oxfordshire, and one mile from Reading. The beauties of this village have been the theme of the poet, the painter, the tourist, and the angler. Nor has the historian forgotten to record some of the memorable stirring incidents which occurred here in the days of the unfortunate Charles I. and Cromwell. Of all the villages in the neighbourhood of Reading, this is probably one of the prettiest and the most interesting. About three miles distant west is Mapledurham.

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## Earley or Erleigh



S a small but pretty village within two miles of the town. It is on the Wokingham road, and contains several handsome residences. In the neighbourhood of the church, magnificent

views of the Oxfordshire hills and other scenery may be had. WHITE KNIGHTS Park, which is near here, was formerly the seat of Sir Harry Englefield, and afterwards of the Duke of Marlborough. The former was distinguished for his scientific attainments and profound scholarship ; and the latter was celebrated for his extensive botanical gardens, containing a valuable collection of rare exotics, and a splendid library of very extraordinary books. A book called the *Boccaccio* of 1471, which had cost the Duke £2260 at the sale of the Roxburgh Library, was purchased by the late Earl Spencer, at the sale of the White Knights Library, some forty years ago, for £918 ! The park is now divested of much of its pristine beauty and glory, by having been broken up into detached portions upon which have been erected some handsome-looking villas.

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## Englefield



IS about six miles from Reading, and is a very attractive spot. Englefield House is the seat of R. Benyon, Esq., one of the members for the county of Berks. The manor was, at a very early period, possessed by the ancient family of Englefield, by whom it was held till the reign of Elizabeth, when it became forfeited to the crown. After passing through various hands it came into the possession of the present proprietor. The house is finely situated on a rising ground, with a large and thick wood at the back, "like a mantle about a coat of arms."


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## Henley

 S a neat town in Oxfordshire, and eight miles north-east from Reading. The annual regatta in the month of June is an event of the greatest importance to some thousands of persons who take a lively interest in such sports. If any of our readers have not seen Henley Regatta, let them not fail to embrace the very next opportunity of witnessing a spectacle to which all England affords no parallel. Our limited space necessarily precludes us from dilating upon this very interesting subject.

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## Hurst

 S a large and pleasant village, and splendid mansions gild its most picturesque spots. The tourist will find here a panorama of rural beauty. Its proximity to the Twyford station has

probably been the cause of increasing the population within the last few years. It has a fine old parish church ; but the village must be seen by the tourist himself to judge of the beauties of this romantic neighbourhood. Bearwood, the magnificent seat of John Walter, Esq., is in this parish.


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### Mortimer

S eight miles distant. It is a neat, pretty, and picturesque village.

The ruins of Roman grandeur still strew the neighbourhood. This is another of the delightful places in the county. The only station between Reading and Basingstoke is at Mortimer. The late Dr Smith, father of Mr Goldwin Smith, the well-known professor at Oxford, lived here for many years. Mr Goldwin Smith himself is a native of Reading, and is a popular favourite with many of the inhabitants.

## Pangbourne

S situated on the direct road six miles from Reading, and near the banks of the Thames. It is the very *beau ideal* of a clean, cosy, comfortable English village. A fine stream called the Pang, famous for its trout, passes through the parish, to which it has doubtless given name. Bere Court in this parish was a summer residence of the abbots of Reading. It is agreeably situated in a retired spot among hills, about a mile distant from the village. The river Thames here widens considerably, and it is a favourite place in the summer for fishing and other sports. The annual regatta is an event of some local interest to many persons. The village is lighted with gas, and the accommodation at the hotels, which were formerly "posting houses," is very respectable.

## Purley



IS the first village between Reading and Pangbourne. Purley Hall, the seat of Frederick Wilder, Esq., stands in a park by the roadside. The mansion was built by Mr Law, who was famous for his connexion with the South Sea Bubble. Warren Hastings resided here during his memorable trial, which made his case the grandest ever brought before the tribunal of human justice. Macaulay, in one of his celebrated essays, has immortalised the name of Warren Hastings. Purley House, the seat of Major Storer, is an elegant mansion from a design by Wyatt.

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## Shinfield



S a large and pretty village three miles from Reading. It was at Three-Mile Cross, in this parish, that Miss Mitford, the accomplished author of "Our Village," lived for many years. She was the

" Sweet chronicler of peaceful joys,  
That bless the cottar's humble lot ;  
Painter of bliss that never cloy,  
For Nature's pleasures weary not."

The visitor, or stranger, could not do better than hire a fly, if he has no carriage of his own, and take a drive to Three-Mile Cross, to see this lovely neighbourhood.



## Sonning.




HIS village is pleasantly situated at a distance of three miles on an easy ascent near the banks of the Thames, and was formerly the see of a bishop, whose diocese included the counties of Berks and Wilts. The see was afterwards removed to Sherborne, in Dorsetshire, whence it was translated to Salisbury; but the county of Berks is now in the diocese of Oxford. The antiquity of the place is strongly marked by the sepulchral monuments and ancient inscriptions within the church. The parish is extensive, containing no less than seven thousand acres, exclusive of that portion of it which is within the adjoining insulated district of Wiltshire. Woodley Lodge, once the property and residence of Lord Sidmouth, is in this parish; also Earley Court, where Lord Stowell lived; and Bulmershe Park,

the seat of J. J. Wheble, Esq. Holme Park stands near the bridge of Sonning, upon an eminence overlooking the Thames, and the beautiful valley through which the river winds for some distance, and is lost amongst the remote hills. The mansion is a handsome modern-looking edifice, square, and built of white brick. The principal front has a bold circular portico. Sonning is visited by anglers in the summer months.

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### **Strathfieldsaye**

 distant seven miles. It is rendered famous as being the residence of the greatest hero of modern times. The scenery is beautiful in this neighbourhood ; and every one who has the opportunity should pay a visit to the place where the great Duke of Wellington once resided. Within the last two years a noble

monument of granite, weighing several tons, has been erected here to the memory of the illustrious hero. In its passage through Reading from Cornwall it attracted considerable attention.



## Streatley



one of the most admired spots in the county. It is situated on the banks of the Thames, across which there is here a ferry to Whitchurch, in Oxfordshire. It is about ten miles from Reading, and six from Wallingford. There was once a convent of the Dominican order in the village. Streatley is situated on the Roman road called Ickleton Way, which, coming from Bedfordshire, crossed the Thames by a ford. The Berkshire Volunteers have had their encampments at Streatley.

The villages of Sulhamstead, Swallowfield, Tidmarsh, Tilehurst, Theale, Ufton, Waltham St Lawrence, Whitchurch, Woodcot, and the town of Wokingham, should be visited by the tourist.

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### **Wargrave,**



ON the banks of the Thames, about three and a half miles from Henley, and seven from Reading, gives its name to the hundred. It had formerly a market, granted in 1218, to the bishop of Winchester. Queen Emma, mother of Edward the Confessor, gave the manor and hundred to the see of Winchester. Bear Place, an elegant modern mansion, is finely situated on an elevated spot surrounded by woodlands. The parish church contains a monument to the memory of Mr Thomas Day, author of "Sandford and Merton," who

died in 1789 at the age of 41. The lines on his monument were written by himself for another person, and were placed here by his widow. Derham, author of the "Physico-Theology," was vicar of the parish from 1682 to 1689.

The celebrated Barrymore lived here for some time in great splendour. Cowper, the poet, also dwelt here, and imbibed much of that taste which was afterwards displayed in the character of his writings. This is the *last* of the villages upon which we inscribe a few notes, but it is *not* the *least*. Wargrave doubtless possesses attractions equal, if not superior, to any other village of similar size and population in the county of Berks.

Our task is now ended. We have endeavoured to compress our thoughts into as small a space as possible. In commencing this little work, and in bringing it to a conclusion, we have to acknowledge that we are greatly

indebted to the magnificent library in the British Museum, to which we have had the *entrée* for many years past. From the vast stores of learning in that noble institution, we have been able to make a selection of some of the facts which are here presented to the reader. Two well-known Histories of Reading—Man's and Coates's—we have recently seen at the Museum, but we confess that it was with a mixed feeling of regret and disappointment that we derived little or no instruction from them. Indeed, on turning over the leaves of both books, many pages presented a dry and repulsive appearance, and singularly ill-adapted to our purpose. We therefore gathered our information with regard to the Abbey, and other objects of interest in the town and neighbourhood, from other sources independently of the historians of Reading. Our materials, however, were loose and irregular; but we hope we have succeeded in some measure in making them

compact and orderly ; if not intelligible and interesting. "He that has much to do," says Dr Johnson, "will do something wrong, and of that wrong must suffer the consequences ; and if it were possible that he should always act rightly, yet when many are to judge of his conduct, the bad will censure and obstruct him by malevolence, and the good sometimes by mistake."

THE END.

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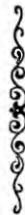
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